



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 15, 2018

Secretary Brent Earnest
New Mexico Human Services Department
Office of the Secretary
P.O. Box 2348
Santa Fe, NM 87504

Dear Secretary Earnest:

New Mexicans in small towns across our state deserve access to affordable, high-quality behavioral health services. As you know, Tri-County Community Services will close its doors on August 31, 2018. On September 1, 2018, patients who rely on Tri-County for behavioral health services will be left with nowhere to turn.

It is extremely challenging to build a strong system of care in our largely rural, underserved state, where health care providers become vital to the fabric of a community. Tri-County provides mental health counseling, substance use disorder treatment- including medication assisted treatment, and many other integral services. For patients who rely on mental health or substance use disorder treatment, few things are as important as the ability to regularly see a trusted provider focused on high-quality care. If the services provided by Tri-County are not replaced by September 1, over 50,000 New Mexicans in Taos, Colfax, and Union counties will lose access to behavioral health services. This is unacceptable. The state of New Mexico must act immediately to ensure these communities do not experience any lapse in services.

As we saw in 2013, when the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) abruptly suspended Medicaid payments to 15 behavioral health providers, disrupting care to some of our state's most vulnerable residents will result in disastrous consequences statewide.

Secretary Earnest, what are you and your administration doing to provide continuity of behavioral health care to the 1,300 vulnerable Northern New Mexicans who currently rely on Tri-County Community Services?

Is HSD preparing to provide high-quality emergency services to this region of the state because of the closure?

Is HSD willing to explore innovative Medicaid billing practices in order to ensure more patients can continue to receive care from their current behavioral health providers?

Due to the urgency of this situation, please do respond by August 21, 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Ben Ray Luján". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress